

THE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION OF INDO-CHINA

to De Lanessan, both in Paris and Tonkin. At that time, only the delta was held by a few garrison posts, while the mountain country was given over entirely to anarchy. Budgetary exigencies had forced the French to repatriate some of their forces at this crucial moment, and out of this mistaken economy grew the rift between the civil and the military. Rumour had it that Bert's marked preference for the military lay at the bottom of this rivalry. Bert, temperamentally and politically, loved the army, but his emotion could not be fully reciprocated, for was he not a civil governor who had displaced a military regime? To the military, it was ridiculous for a civil official to be responsible for keeping order when he had only the legal authority and no practical means of doing so. The army had conquered the country, but to others was going the power and the glory. To the premature intrusion of the civil government, the military attributed the contagion of revolt which was spreading from Annam to the Tonkinese delta. The rub between these two elements was much worse in the north, where the unpacified state of the country necessarily left a larger role to the army. Since Bert had used as civil administrators those ex-Officer-Inspectors who had done such admirable work in Cochin-China, a colonel or a general in Tonkin would often find himself under the orders of a former lieutenant.

If the military had been mildly dissatisfied with Bert, the civil were downright hostile to De Lanessan for having delivered over Upper Tonkin to the army. It was worse than his reinstatement of the mandarins in the delta. They could not deny that the great run of civil administrators were a motley crew, of far from uniform

ability, whose
 capacities did not usually correspond to the extensive
 powers they
 wielded. Poverty and inefficiency revealed in France
 were too often
 thought to qualify a man for a colonial post. To find
 places for this
 host of incompetent newcomers, the provincial
 organization had to be
 expansively and uselessly subdivided* This period of
 civil supremacy
 culminated in a ridiculous military expedition, led in
 person by one
 of the civil residents in command of the militia, his
 infantry. He had
 been roundly beaten by the bandits, to the mirth and
 general satisfac-
 tion of the regular army. In order to keep their
 remunerative posi-
 tions, many of the civil officials insisted that the country
 was pacified.
 Governor Picquet was one of the worst offenders in
 distorting such
 facts in his reports to the Metropole—notably in
 suppressing news of
 the ambush at Cho-Bo (January 1891), which had been
 partly due to
 his negligence. Since Paris paid the military expenses
 of Topki% and